Rep. Yvonne Burke
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701
6/5/77

Dear Rep. Burke,

Art Kevin tells me that you said of me "That son of a bitch has been out to get us from the first."

In more than the factual falsehood, this represents why your committee is and has been in trouble, has, has had and will have no credibility and is the newest in disinformation operations that perpetuate great tragedies.

While your committee's shameful record requires that I oppose it I was not opposed to it from the first. My first, which is also the first book on the Warren Commission, concluded that there was a need for a Congressional investigation. Bad does not become good because you or anyone else wants what is bad to be considered good. What was wrong for Adolph Hitler or Joe Stalin or Je Edgar Hoover or Richard Nixon or Joe McCarthy is not right for Yvonne Burke.

Nor does what you want to be true become truth simply because it may be your desire.

My cautioning against excesses and falsity to promote a Congressional investigation were not well received in 1975 when they were addressed to those who then, predictably, did engage in excesses and did deceive and mislead the Congress.

There are Members who then andlater did seek my views and help, including Mr. Downing and his staff. Rick Feeney and Tiny Hutton will confirm their trips here, the openness of my offers and I am sure my cautions against precisely what has come to pass. When Rick asked me for a sort of position paper at the time of Rules committee action although I rushed it in haste I sent one. In it I explained what I would consider irresponsible, what I could not and would not support and exactly how it would be ruinous to the committee. By what you have done you people have made me Merlin, the man who remembers the future.

Despite my belief that Dick Sprague should not have taken the job because of his prior relationship with Arlen Specter, I accepted his assurance he had no conflict. In a long morning conference with him and others we discussed much, including what would be wrong for himand your committee to attempt, what I could and would do to help you and what I would regard as personally intolerable. My forecast of what would doom your committee was, alas, completely accurate. The greater tragedy is that it was so very obvious - at least to people of concern.

If he is free to speak honestly your research director will tell you how completely false your belief and statement are. He can go back to when I was seriously ill and required hospitalization and even on the way to the hospital worked to help the committee with which he then was. In fact I did what I could not afford, took a private room so they and others in the Congress could consult with me in privacy. He should remember that although the thrombophlebitis in both legs and thighs was acute, and the damage already permanent and beyond remedy, I did what he asked when he came here, gave him copies of whatever he wanted. He was with Sprague and me and others in the morning and he and others and I spent the afternoon together. He told me he would be coming here the first of the following week, with his own xerox machine. I offered him accomadations in my home to save your committee money. He never came and I did <u>not</u> disinvite him.

Within a day or so Jeremy Akers was here. He left with much. I am sure he will tell you I offered more and he felt he had better comprehend what he had then accepted.

The amount of work I have undertaken is more than any one person can hope to accomplish. Nothing would have pleased me more than the proper and successful functioning of your committee. What happened to me is medically serious. It does limit me as it may shorten my life. However, I still work to the limit of my capacity. Yesterday I put in a little more than 20 hours without any rest - to help another who is responsible and is known to you personally. This means I work in haste, sometimes in anger and sometimes do not express myself as clearly as I'd like or as briefly as reflection and rewriting would permit. In my simple view this would mean that I not do something else. There may be parts of this letter you may not take as I intend. This can also be true of my correspondence with Dick Sprague. However, I am confident that what cannot be misunderstood in that written record of last November that my separation from any relationship with your committee was on what for me are and always will be question of principle on which there can be no compromise.

In my view rights are indivisible. The denial of any right to any one becomes a denial to all. Under the law and in our traditional belief you have no right that you deny say James Earl Ray.

Yet without any investigation you ordained him Dr. King's assassin. You personally and you through the committee and the committee in its reports and leaks and in public statements. Can you expect me to have a different standard for you than for the former chief justice? Am I to now turn around and find the identical fault right for you and wrong for him?

To me there is right and there is wrong, there is honesty and there is dishonesty. If you would like me to address what is in your reports and the sessions transcripts of which you have released in terms of fact, right and wrong or honesty I am willing. I think you will not dare it.

You personally knew of me last fall from College students who visited you. Les Payne also spoke to you about me , about what I could do to be helpful and he also gave you unheeded cautions. On this basis alone what you told Art Kevin is false. It is part of a McCarthyite mindset also visible in the committee attack on the press. I have seen no allegation of factual error in any of the reporting that is objected to. I know of no such error in any of this reporting. Unable to defend its own record the committee members merely use their positions to attack the press as CIA agents because it has exposed your committee. This is unalloyed McCarthyism.

I defend these reporters on principle, not their favors to me. They have never reviewed any of my books, have never written favorably of me and not one of them has ever been in any courtroom in which I had an FOIA suit.I doubt anyone has written more critically than I have of the Post on this subject. Yet I cannot permit this to alter my belief, my adherence to basic American traditional belief.

With Art Kevin it is not only that we have been friends for years and that I have had experiences he has not had. I had a prior relationship with Lorem Hall, too. He had gone to court to defeat Jim Garrison's effort to compel him to go to New Orleans and testify. In early 1968 I spent as much of each of three or four days as Hall was then able to do medically. He was in the Los Angeles veterans' hospital. In the end he did agree to go to New Orleans voluntarily. Among the conditions he stipulated were that I accompany him and be with him all the time he was questioned. He trusted me and he did not want to have nobody to support him in a disagreement. From this experience with Hall I am certain of Art's truthfulness when he says Hall insisted on Art being with him in a voluntary meeting with your staff.

What your committee did is consistent with its long record of seeking headlines without concern for truth or right, even decency.

The stage appears to be set for another media event.

With a cooperative witness converted into the headline requirement, a hostile witness.

You have your share of the responsibility for what has happened with and to your committee and what this has done to the country. You neither address nor relieve your ~~pgast~~ past with false accusations against me.

You freely and knowingly chose to bed with Kojak and friend. The cry of rape is unbecoming.

And entirely false.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg